

**Advisory Council for the Education of Students with Disabilities  
Approved Minutes**

**October 26, 2009  
710 James Robertson Parkway  
Andrew Johnson Tower  
Nashville, Tennessee 37243**

Members of the Council in Attendance

David Blier	Christine Lloyd-Burkes
Dawn Bradley	Beulah C. Oldham
Paula Brownyard, Chair	Sharmila Patel
Samuel Cole	Fran Powers
Winnie Forrester	Sebrena St. John
Kyle Hauth	Shannon Taylor
Cynthia Higginbotham, Vice-Chair	Jim Topp
Mary Donnet Johnson	Darlene Walden
Catherine Knowles	Myles Wilson

Members of the Council Not in Attendance

Pamela Burns	Janelle Glover
Chip Fair	Cindy Storey
Jeff Finney	Tonya Watson

State Employees in Attendance

Sandra Albright, TN Department of Education/Division of Special Education (TDE/DSE)  
Bob Blair, TDE/DSE  
Joseph Fisher, TDE/DSE  
Jessica Harbison, TDE/DSE  
Melanie Hatcher, TDE/DSE  
Nathan Jackson, TDE/DSE  
Jamie Kilpatrick, TDE/DSE  
Veronica McDonald, TDE/DSE  
Nan McKerley, TDE/DSE  
Evans Murray, TN Office of Information Resources  
Melanie Patton, TDE/DSE  
Ann Sanders-Eakes, TDE/DSE  
Connie Smith, TDE/Division of Accountability, Teaching & Learning (TDE/ATL)  
Steve Sparks, TDE/DSE  
Branson Townsend, TDE/ATL  
Mary Jane Ware, TN Department of Human Services/Division of Rehabilitation Services  
Karen Willis, TDE/DSE  
Bill Wilson, TDE/DSE

### Visitors in Attendance

Elizabeth Fields, TN Education Association  
Shirlene Harbert, TN Voices for Children  
Rebecca Lovell, TN Voices for Children  
Loria Richardson, The Arc of Tennessee  
Ned Andrew Solomon, TN Council on Developmental Disabilities  
Patricia Valladares, STEP, Inc.

### Welcome

Paula Browyard, Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting and then called the meeting to order. She proceeded to lead the Council members and guests in the Pledge of Allegiance.

### Acceptance of Agenda

Before the Council members conducted the vote to accept the agenda, Paula informed the room that Assistant Commissioner Connie Smith, who was scheduled to present on Graduation Rates and New Requirements, was in a press conference and that she would join the meeting as her schedule permitted. Leaving flexibility in the agenda, the Council voted in favor of accepting the agenda as presented.

### Approval of Minutes from July 20, 2009 Meeting

After some discussion, it was decided by the Council that there needed to be more clarification to the portion of the minutes which talked about a memo on IDEA Eligibility Determinations for Children with Downs Syndrome dated June 3, 2009. Joseph Fisher took this opportunity to introduce Melanie Patton from the audience. She is the newly appointed Assessment Consultant for the TDE/DSE. Hearing no other changes, the minutes were approved with corrections.

### Report from Chair

- Paula first welcomed back Dr. Jim Topp, who had to miss the last few meetings due to health concerns. She, and the rest of the Council, wished him a steady recovery.
- Paula also welcomed Evans Murray, who will be running the audio/visual equipment in order to broadcast the Council meetings via the internet. The Council intends to use this as a means of making the meetings more accessible to the public and hopes it will encourage more input. Since travel is a consideration for members, the meetings will continue to be held in Nashville; however, those interested in viewing and/or participating remotely can visit the Advisory Council page of the TDE/DSE website. (<http://www.tennessee.gov/education/speced/advisory.shtml>) An email address has also been set up for questions during or after each meeting. ([sped.council@tn.gov](mailto:sped.council@tn.gov)) Baring any complications during this meeting, an announcement will be sent out to local education agencies (LEAs), parents and advocacy groups.
- As is customary at each meeting, but especially for the benefit of anyone watching remotely, Paula asked the Council members to go around the table and introduce themselves.

### **Pubic Input**

No one was present to address the Council at this meeting.

### **New Council Goals**

Sebrena St. John was introduced to present the recommendations of the New Goals Subcommittee. There were not many changes made to the previous goals. Goals #1 and #3 were combined and new Goal #3 was written for this school year. Paula suggested assigning a goal to each member to help ensure and monitor the progress being made in each goal area. A vote passed to accept the goals as presented. The new goals can be found on the Council page of the TDE/DSE website.

(<http://www.tennessee.gov/education/speced/advisory.shtml>)

### **Annual Performance Report**

Since Connie Smith was still unavailable, the floor was turned over to Steve Sparks for the introduction of the State's 2008-2009 Annual Performance Report (APR). The information being presented today is only a draft of the APR, which will be finalized and sent to the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) on February 1, 2010. Half of the Indicator areas (5, 7, 9, 10, 11 & 12) will be reviewed by the Council today and, after more data has been collected, the rest (1, 2, 3, 4, 13, 15, 16-19 & 20) will be covered at the meeting on January 11, 2010. Once submitted to the USDOE, the information in this year's APR will be available to the public on the TDE/DSE website.

([http://www.tennessee.gov/education/speced/data\\_reports.shtml](http://www.tennessee.gov/education/speced/data_reports.shtml)) Previous APRs can already be found on the website.

### **Graduation Rates and New Requirements**

Connie Smith was able to join the meeting after having left a press conference which announced the tentative release date for the State Report Card. She mentioned that a new way of reporting was used this year, one recalibrated with the new standards of achievement and value added that will go into effect this school year. This created a new baseline and means that only a one year comparison is possible. As expected, the State received more C's and D's this year but will hopefully be able to make honest and noticeable improvements next year.

She went on to discuss in further detail the new assessments which are driven by the new standards and the effect on graduation rates. Since 2003, the State has held a trajectory goal of 90% graduation rate. This year that goal was changed to a National Governors Association (NGA) "cohort" calculated graduation rate over four (4) years and one summer equaling the number of students graduating divided by the number of freshman enrolled four (4) years earlier (with the exceptions for transfers and other similar circumstances). Dr. Smith informed everyone that there has been a lengthy debate with the USDOE and the State legislators regarding the impact that Special Education students and GED graduates have on these calculations. She also mentioned some discussion advocating an "equivalent diploma" in-line with statewide standards; however no decision had been made as of this meeting.

### **Elections of Chair and Vice-Chair**

Joseph Fisher opened the floor to nominations for Chair and Dr. Topp nominated Paula Brownyard to serve for another year. No other nominations were made and a vote carried to elect Paula as Chair. Mr. Fisher then opened the floor to nominations for Vice-Chair and Samuel Cole nominated Cynthia Higginbotham to continue to serve. No other nominations were made and a vote carried to elect Cynthia to another term.

### **Other New Business**

- \* David Blier gave an update on the transmission of the meeting. One suggestion was made via email to have materials be made available online. The TDE/DSE staff will make attempts to provide these during future meetings. David noted that statistics and polls can also be developed as needed.
- \* The Annual Special Education Conference has been scheduled for February 24-26, 2010. Information for anyone wanting to attend, or even present, can be found on the TDE/DSE website.  
(<http://www.tennessee.gov/education/speced/announcements.shtml>)
- \* The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) National Conference will be held in Nashville on April 20-24, 2010 thanks to a collaborative effort by the Department of Intellectual Disabilities and the TDE/DSE. Thousands from around the country will be in attendance.
- \* Prompted by the Department of Mental Retardation changing its title to the Department of Intellectual Disabilities, Paula asked for thoughts on moving away from the use of "Mental Retardation." Bill Wilson explained that, although no changes can be made to the federal terminology, an amendment could be made by the State legislature to change State terminology. The Council discussed the possible impact this could have, i.e. from students' daily lives to data reporting. Joseph Fisher stated that the TDE/DSE would support any efforts made by the Council to present a proposal to the State legislators. Loria Richardson volunteered the Arc of Tennessee to sponsor and assist the Council with this project. A decision was tabled, however, until further information could be gathered. Winnie Forrester volunteered to Chair a Subcommittee to research trends in other states. She was joined by Samuel Cole and Sharmila Patel and they will present their findings at the January 11, 2010 meeting.
- \* The Council set a tentative meeting schedule as follows:
  - January 11, 2010
  - April 19, 2010
  - July 19, 2010
  - October 2010 - date to be determined.

The meeting was then adjourned.